Living City

June 1979 Volume 18, Number 3

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Living City, bimonthly magazine. 5,000 copies, published by the Focolare Movement, a non-profit corporation at New York, N.Y. 10021, P.O. Box 496.

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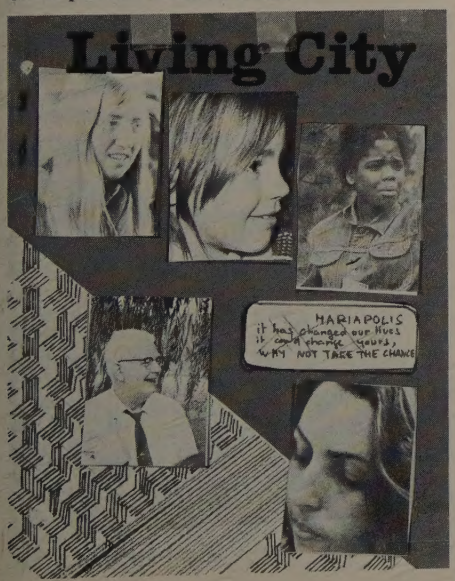
Cover photos: Jennifer Girard



Subscription per year:

U.S.A.	$ 8.00
Canada	$10.00
Other countries -	
Surface mail	$12.00
Airmail	$20.00
Donation subscription	$20.00

To subscribe use enclosed envelope or write to Focolare Movement - P. O. Box 496, New York, New York, 10021

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SPANISH: "Cidade Nueva" Av. da Rivadavia 4939, Buenox Aires 24 Argentina;
"Ciudad Nueva" Ferrer del Rio, 1 esc A, 2°5a - Madrid 28, Spain.

OTHER ENGLISH EDITIONS:
"New City", 57 Twyford Ave., London;
"New City", 1933 Donada St., Pasay City, P.O. Box 332 Manila Philippines;
"New City", 367 Balwyn Rd., Balwyn North 3104, Australia.

The voice of the Church at the U.N.

an interview by Living City with Archbishop Giovanni Cheli, the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, at his office in New York City.

Question: What, in your opinion, is the function of the Holy See Mission to the United Nations?

Generally speaking, the Holy See Mission, just as everything else in the Church, has as its purpose to help bring about and further the Kingdom of God in the world. This is the main purpose. More specifically, though, the reason for the presence of the Holy See at the United Nations is this: we wish that the voice of the Church be heard at the U.N., the meeting point of the community of nations. We feel that the spiritual element should not be omitted from the many components working together to study the various problems of humanity. The spiritual element is the vision of the world that the Gospel gives us. We are present at the United Nations because we believe, as Pope Paul VI has said, that the United Nations today represents an obligatory road to peace. At present, there is no other human institution that could be as effective as the United Nations for the maintenance of peace in the world. What is our work actually? Like all other diplomatic missions we observe the everyday happenings at the U.N. with a somewhat critical eye and report back. The Holy See can then decide how and when it should make its voice heard. Sometimes it speaks in the form of a message by the Pope or through a document of the Vatican's Secretariat of State or of the Commission of Justice and Peace, and of course through the interventions that the members of the Delegation of the Holy See make during the General Assembly or at other bodies of the United Nations.

○

Question: For many it was a particularly beautiful experience to listen to Archbishop Casaroli last fall, when he delivered the Pope's message on disarmament. We had the impression, as you said, that it was, in a way, the kingdom of God brought about in the U.N. Do you remember other similar experiences?

I have observed that every time the Holy Father has sent a message to the United Nations, for instance to the Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly, for a New International Economic Order, or for the Conference of the Law of the Sea, or for the 30th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, the interest among Delegates is tremendous. It is a beautiful testimony of the esteem the Holy See enjoys in a place where we might not normally expect it.

Another experience which manifested an appreciation of the presence and work of the Church was the tenth anniversary of the Pope's visit to the United Nations. Ambassadors, such as those of Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and the Foreign Minister of India, all expressed high praise for the work of the Holy See, for its function in the world, and for Pope Paul VI's famous speech of October 1965. In addition, I would say that almost every day we witness the appreciation of the delegates for the activities of the Holy See and its contribution.

○

Question: Perhaps for some of these delegates the dialogue with the representative of the Holy See to the U.N. is the only encounter with the Catholic Church, or maybe the first one. Isn't it so?

Yes, precisely. For this reason our responsibility is great. We should start each day's work with an always deeper awareness that the encounter many people have with us is actually their encounter with the Church. In some cases it is the first and only encounter they will ever have. For this reason it is very important. Tomorrow these people will return to their own countries where they may be given positions of leadership.

We can assume, therefore, that in the future these diplomats will deal with the Church according to the impression of it they will have received here. If we have enabled them to see how helpful the presence of the Church really is, and how much their countries can benefit from the Gospel, their

attitude may change completely. For these reasons I feel that this position at the United Nations merits the greatest attention and cooperation. In fact, there has been much generosity on the part of religious institutions in making their people available to us because they know that everything they do for us is being done for the Church. I would like to stress the fact that everything done here is of special importance. It is as if we had the whole world at our fingertips, or better said, here we can do something for the whole world.

○

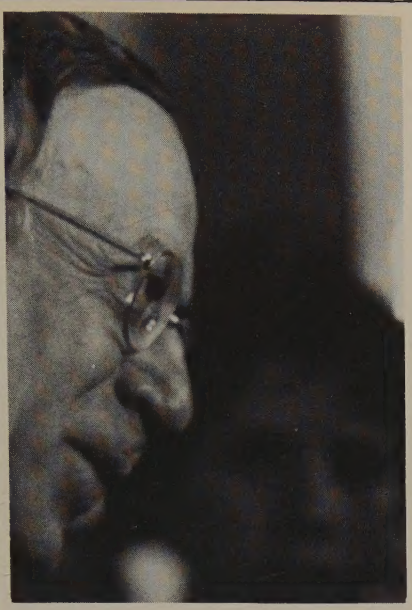
Question: The very name "United Nations" points to this organization's main purpose, which is the unity of all nations. How do you envision it being realized?

It is impossible to achieve unity unless there is a common denominator for these 151 countries with their different cultures, different interests and extremely different situations. Unity can only be achieved through a spiritual factor and through love; and real love we believe comes only from the Gospel. Without this element whatever is done is only a glueing together of pieces of a mosaic. History has clearly shown us that such a mosaic may end up breaking apart all over again. Unity which is not the fruit of love falls apart very easily. The smallest crack in the balance structure is enough to make today's allies become tomorrow's enemies.

○

Question: As a young man, did you ever think that some day you would be a diplomat?

No, frankly, it never entered my mind. I had rather expected to devote myself to parish life. I dreamed about a little parish of my own in the hills of Piedmont in Northern Italy where my father and mother could also have spent their last years in serenity. But the ways of Providence are truly unforeseeable. My Bishop sent me to Rome to study theology. So I went, studied, got my degree and returned to my diocese. At that time, in order to work in a parish, one had to go through a contest. Due to the fact that I was fresh out of theological studies, I obtained a parish, but immediately afterwards my Bishop said to me, "You are entitled to have your own parish, but there are so many military chaplains who have just come back from the war. I would appreciate it if you gave up the parish and went back to Rome to study canon law." "I'll do whatever you wish," I replied. So I returned to Rome, where I spent three more years at the Pontifical University of St. John Lateran. In 1950, while I was on vacation, in my diocese, the Bishop called me and said: "Monsignor Montini wishes you to go to Rome and enter the diplomatic service of the Holy See." I had to change my plans. The dream of the parish vanished, but not the dream of doing apostolic work. I tried to continue it wherever I happened to be, including Guatemala and Spain where I devoted all of my free time to working with young people.



"Unity can only be achieved through a spiritual factor and through love; and real love we believe comes only from the Gospel. Without this element whatever is done is only a glueing together of pieces of a mosaic. History has clearly shown us that such a mosaic may end up breaking apart all over again. Unity which is not the fruit of love falls apart very easily."

○

Question: You have also been in Eastern Europe to work for Church relations in those countries. Could you tell us something about your experience there?

Yes, while at the Secretariat of State from 1967 to 1973, I was involved in the contacts between the Holy See and some of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, especially Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Rumania. Even more than interesting, I would say it was a spiritually uplifting experience. It was interesting because I had to consider the various issues from two completely different points of view: the Christian and the Marxist. It was most edifying because I could see how much faith still exists in these countries and how

much people are willing to go through in order to remain faithful to the Church.

○

Question: We know you were very close to Pope Paul VI. Can you tell us something of the relationship you had with him?

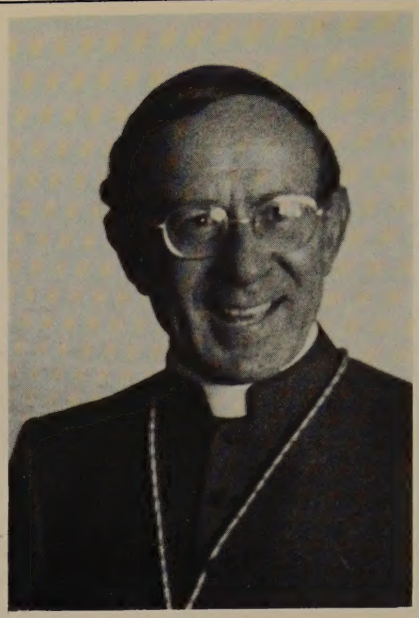
Indeed I did not see him too often. When I was working at the Secretariat of State I saw him only once before leaving for my first diplomatic mission and then two or three other times when I returned to Rome. I always thought he was an exceptional person, a man of an absolutely extraordinary stature, both spiritually and intellectually. He was extremely kindhearted, understanding, and patient. Whenever he received you, even if you were as unimportant as I was, he made you feel that he had all the time in the world for you. Yet he was certainly one of the busiest men in the Roman Curia. One could sense that he had a deep interior life. I always thought that Montini would be Pope one day.

His departure for heaven was certainly a sad one for me, even though a joyous one in the faith, for I was bound to him by great affection.

○

Question: Have you ever met Pope John Paul II?

Yes, I met him, although I don't know whether he still remembers having met me. A year before coming to the United States the then Cardinal Wojtyla invited me through a mutual friend, Monsignor Descour, to have dinner with him in Rome. We had a very simple meal at the St. Martha Hospice and as I recall the conversation was mostly about the situation of the Church in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. It was a topic of the greatest concern to both of us at that time. It was important to me because of my specific work and to Cardinal Wojtyla because he lived there.



"Although I think we can work toward unity through our mutual contacts and efforts I am convinced that unity cannot be achieved, and surely not maintained, unless our actions are motivated by love."

Question: Do you think that we can look forward to the Pope's visit to New York?

Let us hope so. The papers have published such news stories, but I don't know the source of their information. If it is true, I do not know. However, I am inclined to think that the Pope will come to the United Nations one day. Since the very beginning of his Pontificate the Pope has shown very clearly that he attributes the greatest importance to international organizations. (It is enough to read his encyclical). I am sure that a visit by the Pope would have quite an invigorating effect on the United Nations.

○

Question: We attended the consecration when you became a Bishop, and were very moved by the ceremony. May we ask now what it meant to you?

An Italian lady, whom I do not know, and who attended my consecration in St. Peter's Basilica, wrote me a letter. She said, "I thought I detected a great sadness on your face. I tried to approach you after the ceremony but I was not able to." This is what I answered her. "There was no sadness, but I certainly felt the weight of a new and different responsibility; I knew that I was taking on a different dimension before God, the Church, and the people entrusted to me. All this did not sadden me, but certainly made me aware of what God was expecting from me as a successor of the Apostles.

○

Question: Can you tell us why you have chosen as your episcopal motto "Unitas in caritate," (Unity in charity)?

I chose it because although I think we can work toward unity through our mutual contacts and efforts I am convinced that unity cannot be achieved, and surely not maintained, unless our actions are motivated by love. ▲

WORD OF LIFE

"By patient endurance
you will save
your lives."
(Luke 21:19)

Do you know who the saints are?

They are christians who have fulfilled themselves, christians who have "saved their lives." We know this for certain, because the Church has recognized them as saints.

I wish I could give you examples of people still living who will save their lives; but nobody knows who is going to make it to the end. We know of the saints because they have already made it.

Why?

Because they possessed a predominant virtue: patient endurance.

"By patient endurance you will save your lives."

"Patient endurance." This is how the original Greek word has been translated, although it has other meanings as well, including perseverance, steadfastness and trust.

Patient endurance is indispensable when we are suffering, when we are plagued by temptation, when we feel discouraged, when we are attracted by the allurements of the world, and when we are being persecuted.

I think that you, too, must have found yourself in at least one of these situations and experienced that without endurance you would have given in. Maybe you did give in at times. Perhaps right now, at this very moment, you are in one of these painful situations.

So, what should you do?

Pull yourself together and . . . go ahead with patient endurance.

Otherwise, you cannot call yourself "christian."

As you know, anyone who wants to follow Christ must take up his or her cross every day, and at least with the will, love suffering. The christian vocation is a vocation to patient endurance.

Addressing the early christian community, the Apostle Paul refers to his own endurance as an example of christian authenticity. He does not even hesitate to put it on a level with miracles.

Furthermore, if we love the cross and are perseverant, we will be able to follow Christ who is in heaven and, therefore, "save our lives."

"By patient endurance you will save your lives."

There are two kinds of people. First, there are those who hear the call to be true christians but do not fully accept it. It enters their souls like seed falling on rocky ground. These people have great enthusiasm, but it is like a straw fire which burns out quickly, leaving nothing behind.

Then, there are others who welcome this call, just as good and fertile ground receives the seed. Christian life springs up in them; it grows, overcomes obstacles and weathers all storms.

These people are the ones who possess patient endurance, and . . . *"By patient endurance you will save your lives."*

Obviously, if you truly want to have patient endurance you cannot rely on your own strength alone.

You will need the help of God.

Paul calls God, "the source of all patience and encouragement" (Rom. 15:15).

Therefore, you must ask him for it, and he will give it to you.

If you are a christian, you cannot be content with just having been baptized or with an occasional act of piety or of charity. You need to grow as a christian, and no spiritual growth can take place in you unless you experience trials, sufferings, obstacles and struggles.

Those who love are the ones who truly have patient endurance. Love knows no obstacles, sees no difficulties, and withholds no sacrifices. Patient endurance is love that has withstood the test.

Mary is the prototype of the person who has patient endurance. As a little girl she chose God as her all, and she remained faithful to him throughout her whole life.

In her youth, according to tradition, she consecrated herself to God as a virgin but she was not afraid to become a mother when God asked it of her. She became the mother of Jesus, and yet remained a virgin. She persevered in her vocation even when Joseph doubted; even when she had to flee to Egypt with him; and when she lost him for three days while he was in the temple. With patient endurance, she persevered in loving God and his will, as she kept her secret for 30 years, so that Jesus could carry out his mission in the last three years of his life. Such was her perseverance in following God's plan for her that, although she was enduring immense grief she still stood steadfast at the foot of the cross on which her son hung crucified.

(continued on page 6)

WORD OF LIFE

(continued from page 5)

Then, after the Ascension, she remained at the heart of the newly-born Church and persevered in her love for God to the point that, when her hour came, she was assumed into heaven.

Mary is the woman of patient endurance.

Ask God to enkindle in your heart a great love for him. The ability to endure patiently all the difficulties of this life will come to you as a consequence. And through this patient endurance, you will have "saved your life."

"By patient endurance you will save your lives."

There is still more. This kind of endurance is contagious. Those who possess it will also encourage others to be faithful all the way to the end.

I spoke of the saints, of Mary. They are people who were able to bring countless souls to God, people who have continued to have an influence on others throughout the centuries with the example of their patient endurance, with the light coming from the very love that gave them patient endurance.

Let's aim high. We have only one life, and a short one at that. Let's try our hardest, day after day, facing each difficulty as it comes in order to follow Christ . . . and we will "save our lives."

Chiara Lubich

WORD OF LIFE FOR JULY

"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

(Mt. 19:24)

EXPERIENCES

Each month a "Word of Life" appears in Living City or in its Supplement. The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Word of Life.

I am a social worker. Oftentimes I am misunderstood at work and my patience is tried.

Recently I was trying to help a young girl, an unwed mother. Suddenly she became very upset, lost control and slapped me. I was stunned for a few seconds and, I must confess, I felt a sense of anger coming over me. My first reaction was to scold her. The word of life, ". . . put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure he has received," came to mind and I did not utter a word. Then, as if impelled by some inner force, I took her by the hand and told her that I could understand her reaction knowing her anxiety and hurt. She began to cry and putting her arms around me, she said, "I am sorry; I feel so hurt and bitter that I only wanted to hurt somebody."

Two weeks have since gone by and now that young lady stops in regularly for advice. We have established a deep rapport which enables her to face the difficulties that come up.

a.h.

One Saturday, I took some clothes to the laundry and I sat on a bench next to two ladies. When I heard them speaking in Arabic, I said "hello," and introduced myself to them. They told me that they were Palestinians. After they found out that I was from Lebanon, they were cold with me and kept on talking, thereby excluding me from the conversation.

I thought to myself, "they should know I am not their enemy and that I have love for them, and not hatred." At that moment, one of them left, so I went to the other woman and spoke to her. I learned that she was living a few blocks away from my house. She began to talk freely. I listened to her with attention and she told me about her family, her children and and their school. She told how hard it was for her to get a job. When another Palestinian lady came into the laundry room, she introduced me to her and we all talked together. During that time, I tried to love only Jesus in them and to forget about their nationality or their attitude toward me. Before leaving, the woman said perhaps we could meet another time. I saw that she was smiling and happy.

a.m.

When I first saw what the word of life was for the month, I knew immediately that it was no coincidence. Every year there is a Talent Night in our parish. I had not offered to help with it last year, or the year before, both times for legitimate reasons, but this year there was no reason or excuse. The fact was that I did have some experience and ability for putting on variety shows from my years of teaching high school when I produced and directed shows.

The word of life was ". . . put your gifts at the service of one an-

other, each in the measure he has received." So I offered my help, explaining what experience I had had so that I could help in the best way possible. As things turned out, the person in charge did not really know how to divide things up so that each person who offered to help could be as helpful as he might have been. Nevertheless, it was an opportunity to love and to be "one" with the others in putting on the show. The Parish Hall was crowded and it was an excellent evening which seemed to strengthen the feeling that the parish was a family.

e.s.

We've had some difficulties in the family, that only the immediate family knew of. However, a member of the family began to spread gossip beyond the family. When I first heard of it, I was hurt but when I found out how far it had spread, the hurt became deeper, and I became angry. I felt justified in confronting her about it. I became obsessed with the idea and picked up the phone to call. Each time I tried there was no answer. I decided to go to her home but first discussed it with my husband. His reaction was, "that's not like you."

At this point I began to think of this situation in the light of the word of life. The words, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me" (Luke 9:23), seemed to enlighten me. I had seen this only as an injustice, and not as an opportunity to renounce myself. It took a great deal of will power not to call. The next morning I awoke very peaceful that I had not given in to myself.

Then a few days later I received a call from her, a thing she rarely did. Although she made no reference to the issue I got the impression that she was trying to make it up to me. Two days after this her sister died and I had an opportunity to help her.

s.t.

VATICAN CITY
January 17, 1979

THE GEN WITH POPE JOHN PAUL II

630 Gen boys and girls participating in the International Gen Conventions in Rome were greeted by the Pope at the general audience of January 17, 1979.
At the end of the audience, after having given his blessing, the Holy Father asked the participants for silence and invited the "young focolarini" to sing as they had done earlier. "This is a feast" and many other Gen songs were then sung while the Pope greeted the sick, the newlyweds and representatives of other groups.

The story of

a man who did ordinary things in an extraordinary way

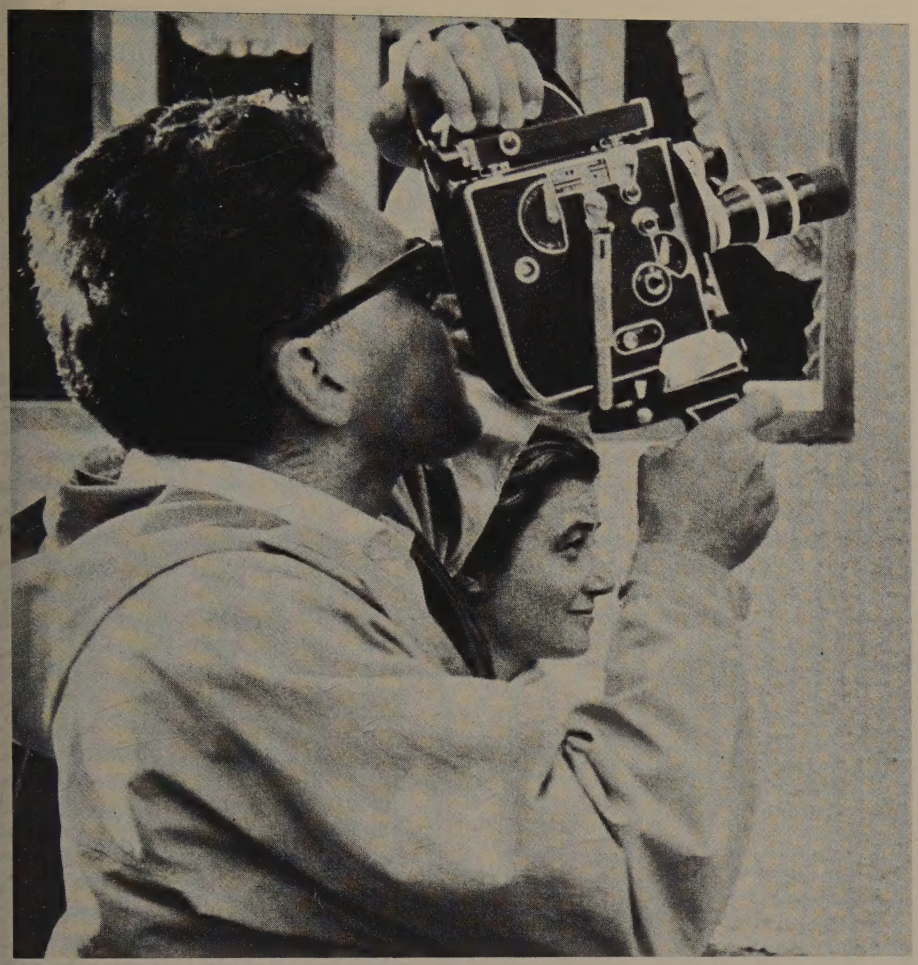
Ready even tonight

A few days before his death, Vita Bulletti had returned from a trip to Lebanon and Palestine where he had gone to visit communities of the Focolare Movement. He had come back to Italy with something new and important in his soul; one could even see it in his face. It was the experience of having seen the places where Jesus lived, and it had left an indelible impression on him: "Everything there makes you feel his presence," he said, "one would never want to leave."

Then, on February 21, 1979 he had a serious accident, and he was called from this life by God.

Although his full first name was Vitaliano, his friends all called him "Vita," which in Italian means "life," — for them it expressed his most striking spiritual characteristic. He had been born on a farm near Florence, Italy. "My grandfather was a surveyor and the administrator of an estate," he once said, "My father (also a surveyor) died when I was just a month and a half old. My mother was very young. She had married at the age of eighteen, and became a widow when she was only nineteen years old. You can understand what a suffering this must have been for her. She never married again, and

Vitaliano Bulletti with other members of the Focolare Movement during a recent international convention.



Vitaliano Bulletti with Chiara Lubich. "Vita", as he was called by his friends, was responsible for the filming of major events in the life of the Focolare Movement in many countries of the world.

lived only for me. She spent her whole life working to support me and to pay for my schooling. She dreamed that one day I would graduate and make a name for myself."

When Vita was still very young, he and his mother moved to Pistoia where he attended elementary and secondary school. "My mother raised me as a Christian," he later wrote, "I went to mass on Sundays, but I didn't care too much for Catholic organizations and I disliked 'religious' things. When a friend of mine invited me to the parish center, I went only because there was a billiard room, a sports field and a ping-pong table. I was more or less indifferent to everything else. I was fourteen years old at the time."

"At the end of that school year, a priest invited me to attend a retreat. I tried to get out of it in every possible way, but he came all the way to my house and convinced my mother to encourage me to go. In the end I went, and those three days turned out to be very important for me. I was attracted by something, perhaps by the talk on Christ's passion. I do know that for the first time I understood God's love for me. I understood how much Jesus had loved me and how much he still loves me now. It was such a discovery! I felt that I had to respond to his love in some way. That experience changed my life completely, and I returned home a different person."

Vita became involved in Catholic Action. Then the war began; his house was bombarded. Near the end of the war, he was summoned to serve in Germany but he managed to avoid it.

The end of the war was a time of reflection for Vita. He felt that it was his vocation to be a priest, but after spending two years in a seminary he decided to leave. He was openly seeking something. "I considered going to college, but it cost a lot of money for tuition and books. At that time, my mother was working as a cloakroom attendant in a hotel. She earned just enough to pay our living expenses, so I realized that if I wanted to study I would have to find a job. I went from one thing to another until I finally found a permanent job in a metal-works factory in Florence. I earned very little, but it did allow me to go on studying."

In 1949, there was a turning point in Vita's life. "It was a rather difficult time for me; it seemed that something was lacking in my life. I felt a great need to find something more — a need to grow in union with God."

Meanwhile, Vita was working hard during his free time. He took part in all the activities of his parish in Florence which was headed by an active and very able pastor. He was also involved in politics and sports.

"I did many things, and I did them gladly," he said, "but they weren't fulfilling. I was becoming exasperated and impatient; there seemed to be no one who had the same needs I felt within me. I thought: in due time God will lead me to meet that person whom he has destined to share my life, and we will go to him together. However, for the moment I had put aside all thoughts of marriage because I wanted to finish studying first."

It was then that a young woman who was also active in his parish (she later became a focolarina) introduced him to members of the Focolare Movement who were just forming a group in Florence. In the beginning, Vita had many reservations about the group and hesitated to become involved, because among many Catholics of that time, people who spoke about "unity" were considered "com-

munists" and those who spoke about the "gospel" were presumed to be "protestants." But very soon Vita realized that the outlook of these people and the way of life they followed held the solution to all of his problems. Silvana Veronesi, one of the first focolarine[1], was attending a university in Florence. It was her life and her words which finally convinced him.

"The Gospel which I knew so well, which I explained and commented on, and the catechism I taught to the children, all became new. Before, I had known many things but they were only in my mind. They had never penetrated my heart and, moreover, I had never put them into practice."

The decision to live "the present moment" was an important step in Vita's life. "Like everyone else, I suppose, most of my problems arose from the fact that I was either thinking about the past or worrying about the future. I had never understood that I could 'live God' only by living in the present because God is the eternal present. This understanding completely changed my life."

Then, the key to it all: "I had understood that the Gospel put into practice contains the solution to every problem." And he found the solution "par excellence" in choosing as the ideal of his life Jesus in the moment he suffered the most and, therefore, loved us the most — the moment he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46).

"I then remembered that I had discovered God, for the first time, in his passion, in the suffering which he had endured for me. I realized that through that first encounter Jesus had prepared me to later understand and center my life on the moment of his greatest suffering. This was not just a great discovery — I felt immense gratitude to God. In that moment I truly understood what the love of God is."

Finally, Vita met Chiara Lubich, the foundress of the Focolare Movement, first in Florence and then in Trent which was then still the center of the Movement. It is hard to describe the work of God's

FACE TO FACE WITH GOD

Excerpts from the writings of Vitaliano Bulletti

Rome, May 17, 1964
(The day two focolarini priests celebrated their first mass.)

Never have I felt such a strong attraction to the priesthood as I did on that day, and never before did I realize how great, majestic and beautiful the priesthood of a focolarino is. At the same time, I thought, "No one is less worthy than I to receive this great gift," and so, I offered it to Jesus.

Paris, October 29, 1964

We are looking through the talks of Pope Paul VI to find everything he has said about Mary, so that we can then publish it in "Nouvelle Cite,"[1] I'm beginning to realize how much this pope loves Our Lady. Something which he said at the general audience of October 7 (the Feast of the Rosary) made a deep impression on me and gave me great joy. Making a connection between Mary and the priesthood, he affirmed that she "preceded it and surpassed it" through the "unique and superlative" role she played in the plan of our salvation. But this was not all. Speaking of himself as pope, he remarked, ". . . if the priesthood, in its highest degree, holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven, the Queen of heaven is Mary."

I like immensely to see how the pope gives Mary the place she deserves.

Grottaferrata, May 1971
(From a letter to Chiara Lubich.)

How true it is that sickness is a sign of God's mercy! I have experienced his merciful love in this way: First of all, this period of forced inactivity has made it easier to come "face to face" with God in me, and therefore, in spite of my failings, to put each thing in its proper order of values. And then, I understood more deeply the merciful love which God has for me, personally . . . These were like "moments of truth" which God has let me experience, rooting me in a truer humility, and in the absolute certainty of his love for me.

(1) The French edition of the magazine of the Focolare Movement.

Grottaferrata, November 30, 19
(From a letter to Chiara Lubic

I must tell you that I have never h
fore experienced to such an extent t
sweetness of God's love which com
from having tried to love Jesus Forsak
and Mary Desolate. "Happy are tho
who have not seen and yet believe
(John 20:29) is the word of life whi
you gave me more than 20 years ag
and last night, I assure you, I was tru
"happy."

Grottaferrata, February 23, 19

I want to tell you in a few wo
about the graces which God has giv
me lately . . . One of these is the illn
I came down with about a year ago, a
from which I am now on the way to
covery. It has led me to appreciate s
fering — even if it is small — as never h
fore, and to try to take advantage of i

Grottaferrata, December 9, 19

Perhaps for the first time I und
stood that it is one thing to love a
another to "be in love." I followed G
in the Movement because I was fas
nated by him; I followed him becau
the light of wisdom made everythi
else around me fade into obscurity, b
cause Jesus in the midst was somethi
marvellous; it was paradise on eart
There have also been difficult momen
which I tried to overcome out of lo
for Jesus Forsaken, and I think I've su
ceeded up until now . . . But can I s
that I was, or that I am now, truly "
love with God?"

During a mass here in our small cha
el, I understood that the only thing
do was to begin again as if I were ju
born now and were only now starting
live, preferring my life up to now to a
other life, even to that of the greate
saint who ever existed, precisely becau
this suffering is a great Jesus Forsake
. . . I believe that "to be in love wi
God" is a very great grace which mu
be merited.

Grottaferrata, November 14, 19

I feel that all of my physical, men
and spiritual faculties are being calle

though by an irresistable force, to render all of themselves. My whole of looking at both natural and supernatural things is gradually changing. ave the distinct impression that my has acquired another dimension, one which the divine prevails over everyng else. Always more, this dimension ms to be inundating my soul, and ev thing else becomes secondary to it.

Alghero, July 16, 1977

I've tried to do things before God, I really don't know how correct my praisal is. I need more practice, even ugh I've noticed that things have n going better in the last few days. greatest difficulty arises from the t that I continually get distracted to h an extent, that it's not easy for me keep my heart in continual contact h God.

Grottaferrata, September 20, 1977

Who knows how long it will be after d calls me before I'll be able to enjoy h all of you the divine happiness of final banquet?

Grottaferrata, November 4, 1977

It seems to me that I have penetrated a more real and fundamental way the y substance of this mysterious Mysti- Body which is the Church. Consently, I feel far more a part of and reonsible for its human and divine reals.

Grottaferrata, December 16, 1977

I am starting all over again, and I will ntinue to always begin anew, as long God gives me life . . . and I hope that will let me live long enough to sucd in giving him a little joy.

Grottaferrata, November 9, 1978

There is in me the awareness of my n nothingness and of my inability to e God as ardently as I would like . . . t, at the same time, I am experiencing new confidence that one day he will w me into the fire of his love," as St. erese of Lisieux used to say.

grace in a person's life. Undoubtedly in those meetings Vita experienced in a deep way the meaning of Jesus' words "Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them" (Mt. 18:20).

"I felt such a great peace and tranquility," he later said, "I understood why Peter had said to Jesus, "Let us set up three tents here" (Mt. 17:4).

In Trent, Vita came to know the first focolarini (at that time, the Movement had only taken root in a few Italian cities such as Trent, Rome, Milan and Turin). "Those days were truly marvelous. Being there and seeing what the "focolare"[2] was, I understood what it means to be a "focolarino"[3], what God wanted from me, and the significance of the long path I had traveled to reach that point. God wanted me all for himself. He wanted all of me, and wanted me to set aside everything else in order to follow him for the rest of my life."

Vita's home became the first "focolare" in Florence. Later he moved to the "focolare" in Rome. "When I arrived Chiara told me, 'Now, don't ever turn back.' This was the beginning of my adventure as a 'focolarino'."

Vita was the director of the men's branch of the Movement first in Sicily and then in Belgium and Holland (where, among other things, he began the publication of "Nieuwe Stad," the Dutch edition of our magazine), and also in France and Central Italy.

Later, Vita undertook an important task in the Coordinating Council of the Focolare Movement: it was to maintain a constant interchange among the members of the Movement, using the most modern and rapid means of communication, so that "everything" could truly "belong to everyone" as in a family whose supernatural spirit creates a unity which surpasses that of natural families. In this way, the members can be one body, as St. Paul said, a body in which the spiritual sharing is complete, to the extent that "we suffer, rejoice, struggle and pray for the very same goal, all one heart and one soul."

This task became almost second nature to Vita; it became part of his personality. He lived and worked so that the news shared among members of the Movement might strengthen unity, and become an element of incentive and mutual support. He dedicated himself to this work with constancy and precision, continually trying to become more proficient. Those who worked with him remember the minute care with which he made every tape recording, every videotape and film. He considered these tasks to be a service to everyone, even those who would come in the future, so that they might be heirs to the entire patrimony of ideas and events which comprise the first stage of life of the Focolare Movement.

In the summer of 1956, when "Citta Nuova"[4] was still only a mimeographed leaflet published in order to help those who had participated in the Mariapolis in the Dolomites to remain in contact, Vita was among those who were entrusted with writing it. Then when "Citta Nuova" became a regularly published periodical, the first scientific articles were written by him. When the very first tape recordings were being made, a center for recording and documentation was set up for the purpose of taping meetings, conversations on the spirituality, and life experiences. It was he then, along with several others, who worked to organize it and then to develop it, little by little, making use of the newest technological advances. He prepared documentaries on the activities of the Movement as well as on the small cities which were just coming to life and on the Movement on every continent. To gather this information, Vita undertook numerous trips all over the world, to Asia, North America, Africa, Australia and many European countries.

Just as he was faithful in doing the will of God moment by moment (and he often spoke of this to others, helping them to be equally faithful) and just as he

1-3) see "What is the Focolare Movement", inside front cover.
4) the Italian edition of the magazine of the Focolare Movement.

couldn't live without mutual charity at home or at work (and he would call attention to the fact whenever the atmosphere of charity waned), in the same way, he was extremely careful to record the various events, feeling they belonged to the work of God.

He strove for perfection in everything he did, paying attention to the smallest details, because he was convinced that the "present moment" which had impressed him so deeply in the beginning was a reality to be lived all the time.

"He was good and humble, he felt himself to be the littlest of all in terms of spiritual maturity. He never drew attention to himself. He loved everyone and could not live without having Jesus in the midst with his friends," wrote Chiara Lubich to the Gen 3 (the children who compose the third generation of the Movement).

In response to a friend in the Gen Rosso Band who once asked him what is the essence of communion in the spirituality of the Movement, Vita answered, "You see, in order to live this communion well one must be a 'living Jesus Forsaken,' because he is the one who reunited humanity with God."

Herein was, certainly, the secret of his simplicity, his serenity and his wisdom. "With him," a friend once said, "one felt completely at ease, in perfect charity and in joy."

Yet he suffered, especially upon the death of his mother who had come to Rome to be closer to him in the last years of her life, and then again during a period of extreme fatigue when, ready for anything as always, he accepted his inability to work.

For the past few years, Vita, along with several other of Chiara's first companions, was entrusted with a very important task — that of helping with the formation of of the focolarini who live in the communities which are at the heart of the Movement. He carried out this responsibility with diligence, thoughtfulness and purity of heart — always giving those he came in contact with a sense of the divine and of what is essential in life, without a trace of egoism.

Whether Vita was making a film, attending to the formation of his youngest companions, or teaching on the means of communication at the international school of Loppiano, he gave every activity the same importance because he recognized in each one the will of God. "He did everything with great care and love, whether it was listening to someone or taking a picture," said someone close to him.

The friends who lived and worked with him at the international center for focolarini during the last years of his life say that he was: "disconcerting" because of his great simplicity and accessibility; always open even though somewhat reserved by nature; a person who gave completely of himself without pretention. He did ordinary things in an extraordinary way.

Vitaliano Bulletti (indicated by the star in the top photo) conversing with participants in Mariapolis, the summer convention of the Focolare Movement. Until 1959, the Mariapolis was held each year in the Dolomite Mountains in northern Italy.

Perhaps this is the most important message which Vita has left us — to build the kingdom of God every day with patience and in unity. "It wasn't apparent at first glance," many people from all over the world have said of him, "but in his simplicity and genuineness he communicated the presence of God, so much so, that after his visit those he left remained more united among themselves, more united to God, more serene, and more joyful."

"Throughout these years," said a friend of his who is a priest, "I had many opportunities to celebrate mass in his presence, at times even alone with him. I must say that I was moved by the spiritual weight of his presence which seemed to contribute a special dimension to the Mass. This was undoubtedly due to the union with God that he had."

He himself once said in one of his many talks with the young people at Loppiano, "I would like us to spend these moments together striving towards sanctity, living these moments in depth. Let us put aside everything which God is not asking us to do right now — all the thoughts which might come to us, thoughts about what we will do tomorrow or who will be coming. Tomorrow is in the future. So we must be ready to go before God, and some of us may not even be alive tomorrow. It is useless to think about the future. Let's live these moments together well, in such a way that they will have value in the eyes of God and won't be wasted."

God took him, unexpectedly, because he was ready as he had told those young people, "We must be ready to go before God, even tonight." God knew that, for Vita, these were not just words, but the substance of his life.

Guglielmo Boselli

5) A small town built by the Focolare Movement in Italy. For further information see Living City, vol.6, no.2 and vol.7, nos.1 and 3.

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

Our yard and beyond

Our yard had gotten to be quite a mess. Branches had fallen from the trees, and pieces of paper and wood were still there after I had done a project in the house. It would be a big job but it was time that I cleaned it all up now that the weather was so nice.

So I made my plan and set aside Saturday.Well,my wife,Sandy, had plans for Saturday, too. She would have to be away for most of the day with the baby. The other two children would have to stay with me and I could work in the yard and watch them.

After she left, the first thing that the children said was, "Gee, we'd like to go to the store. Can't we go to the store?" During the week I don't usually have time for the children so I thought the best thing to do is put aside my project and love them. The yard would have to wait.

Well, it took more time than I expected. When we got back, the children started playing in the yard while I cleaned it up. It just so happened that quite a few of the other children in the neighborhood decided to play in our yard, too. So, many times during the day I had to put down my rake and settle arguments, tie shoelaces, and do various things like that. But the love was returned, too, because the children also helped me. They made a game out of picking up the sticks and pieces of paper, and raking up their play area so that I wouldn't have to do it.

By the end of the day the yard was completely in order. Sandy came home and she was very proud that I had finished the whole project. I was happy, too. More importantly though, was the fact that I had really tried to love in every instance of the day.

J. M.

I usually have the car one or two days a week and these are the days that I accomplish my errands. One day, I had several things to take care of for someone, and they all had to be done by a certain time. Well, I thought that I would "nap" the baby in the morning and then have the afternoon to do these things.

In the meantime, though, a friend whom I haven't seen for a long time decided to drop over. When she first came, I got a little nervous, and I thought to myself, "Oh no, I'll never make these deadlines." But then I tried to put this thought aside and really love Jesus in the person in front of me. She left and I began to think, "Now, I still have time." With that, the plumbing in the bathroom backed up and I had a flood on my hands. I tried to remain calm. After cleaning up, I went out into the backyard to call the other two children to come with me, and I found them covered with mud. They would have to be bathed before we could go anywhere. I loved them and was patient with them, and once again, I had to forget my plans and my deadline.

By this time there was less than an hour to finish everything. One place that I had to go to was about a twenty minute drive. The baby started to cry, and we were stopped at a railroad crossing while a freight train passed. These trains sometimes take forever, but I reminded myself that love was the only thing that counted and this helped me to put the time out of my mind and soothe the baby. In the end I accomplished all that was necessary, with one minute to spare. But it made me even happier to know that the love I tried to do it all with, would remain.

One Sunday there were about seven small children playing in our backyard. It seemed that they were in and out of the house more times than I could count, and each time with a different problem. I happened to be a little sick that day, and my first reaction was annoyance. One little boy came in crying and telling me that another child had hurt him. I felt like getting cross with him, but what came before me so clearly was that he was Jesus to love. I took his hand and spoke to him gently, and he responded to me, which is rather unusual for him. This seemed to change the whole attitude of the children in the yard, and they played together more peacefully.

S. M.

"Our yard and beyond," the title given to the experiences shared by the couple on the left, is indicative of the spirit of the "New Family Movement," which tries to accomplish unity not only within the family but also with all those who come in contact with it.

A welcome opportunity

In March of last year, five of our children contracted chickenpox. Since I had never had the disease as a child, I ended up with it too. As I was recovering from the chickenpox, I discovered that I was expecting our seventh baby. I remember that it was a moment of mixed emotions for me. I was happy because I believe that a baby is a great gift from God but at the same time I was afraid of the effects of the virus on the baby. It was a big suffering for me.

A few years back, I had chosen God as my ideal, a God who is love. I realized that in this suffering he was giving me the opportunity to choose him again and to believe in his love for me. This gave me the strength to say that whatever the outcome of the pregnancy, it would be God's love for me and my family.

Our obstetrician was really concerned about the possibility of the baby having problems at birth and so he did some research on what the possible effects might be. He called me up on the phone and proceeded to tell me what he had found out. At one point he even commented that "some couples would just get rid of this baby and try for another one." I listened to him and I tried to love him but I have to admit that it wasn't easy to listen to him to the end. At a certain moment, I told him that I would never consider doing anything to the baby because I believed that it had the right to live as much as I did. And so this ended all his questioning, and my illness and the idea of aborting the baby was never mentioned again.

The months passed by and I had my moments of fear about the outcome of the pregnancy and certainly, the suffering was there. But I found that this suffering was a treasure and like Mary, I wanted to keep it in my heart. I went ahead to try to do the will of God in every present moment and not to worry. I felt a closeness and rapport with Jesus. I had the strong impression that I was not alone. God was giving me a helping hand through the Eucharist, which I received everyday and his words which I tried to live month by month.

When November came, the word of life was, "Whatever you ask the Father together in my name, he will give you." We decided to really take him up on his word. Before going to the hospital to have the baby, Tom and I, prayed together not only that everything would go well but that we would be given the strength to say "yes" to whatever was ahead of us whether it was favorable or not. I felt assured that He would hear us because of his promise.

While I was in labor, I had the feeling of great calm knowing that everything was in God's hands. Everything seemed to be going well until the amniotic sac ruptured and the doctor found the amniotic fluid to be very bloody. I knew right away that this meant trouble. Tom was in the room with me. I looked at him and I knew that we were one in trying to love this suffering and so I continued to remain calm. I tried to make myself one with the doctor

by cooperating in every way I could in order to make his job a little bit easier for him.

Shortly after, our baby was born and it was a joy that is difficult to explain. It was a joy to have received this baby who was perfect in every way. I can remember counting fingers and toes. One of the possible problems that my obstetrician had mentioned in the beginning was that the baby would have respiratory difficulties. I saw that the baby was breathing well and there were no signs of distress.

God had shown us once more that he can never be outdone in generosity. I had tried to show him that I loved him, even in my small way, by embracing my suffering. We believed in his love and he gave us a gift — our Annamarie.

M. H.

Grateful for everything

I read the word of life for the month, "Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Mt.24:42). It seemed familiar to me after having lived it so intensely with my father.

My dad retired from his job at the earliest age he could. He was, as he said, "tired of the rat race." After his retirement, there didn't seem to be anything he wanted to do. He seemed a little lost. He started drinking more heavily, even taking a drink before breakfast. While he was working he would have had to see a doctor if he missed more than three days of work; now he avoided the doctor completely. Our family encouraged him to find a doctor and get a check-up. It never happened.

One day my mother called me and said my father had been in bed for several days. She told me he had finally agreed to go to the doctor I had recommended. After hearing all his symptoms, I was quite concerned. The doctor wanted to examine my father the next morning at the emergency room of the hospital.

There was a special closeness with my father as we drove to the hospital that Sunday morning. He had a small suitcase with him and we both knew the future was uncertain. I had a feeling my father had said his "yes" to many things — the least of which was agreeing to see a doctor. There was a sense of the divine which gave a beauty and a peace to even those difficult moments of waiting to see the doctor and then to hear his opinion.

The doctor wanted my dad admitted immediately and tests began the following morning. I remember praying the rosary and stopping at the chapel after leaving my dad at the hospital. The mystery of the Resurrection seemed so meaningful.

During the following week the doctor consulted with specialists and they gave my dad many tests. The numbers were very discouraging to them. Those days my father was permanently attached to an intravenous tube with the bottle attached to its stand. My children didn't know how to react when they saw their grandfather with all his "attachements."

The doctor gave me "progress reports" as the tests proceeded. I was at the public library reading medical volumes trying to understand the terminology and the chances my dad had for recovery.

One morning the doctor called me with the final test results. There was little reason for optimism. The doctor was talking about the usual means of "exit" meaning death for people with my father's degree of illness. He said I should tell my father he could die at any time and it would be good to call all his relatives and friends. The doctor spoke of hours or days, not weeks.

The relationship between my father and I developed into something very beautiful during those days. For several years I had been trying to live the life of the Gospel in unity with many others. I had been going to the Eucharist daily. It seemed the fruit of this life was something I could share with my father during that time. It wasn't so much by speaking, although we did speak of God. It was more a "being", a being love for him. My father did not show a great fear of death. When I told him what the doctor had said, he replied, "I know that. I know I could die any time." My father showed a quiet determination to live that surprised me. He didn't seem the same man who had indulged in a pre-breakfast cocktail. One day my father mentioned, "Some guys from A.A. came by today. They left some literature. I think I'll look them up if I get out of this place."

After about four weeks in the hospital my dad seemed no better and no worse. He asked his sister if he could stay at her home for a while, since she used to be a nurse. The doctors gave my aunt detailed diet instructions and also a complete run-down on his condition. She was concerned, but agreed to everything. After a few more weeks my dad felt well enough to return home. He was still very weak and required a special diet. His health improved enough that he could attend an evening A.A. meeting.

Over a period of months he continued to gain strength. It was beautiful to see. It seemed that since everything had almost been taken from him, he was grateful for everything he had. He didn't complain despite the many discomforts. What was even more beautiful was the way he began to care for others who had his own problem. He spoke at meetings and visited those in hospitals as he had been visited. Someone told me on the phone with a deep sincerity, "Thank God for your dad." Even some of the relationships in our family that had been weakened over the years were improved.

So as I looked at the word of life, it seemed I understood what I had to do. I want to live this life as the gift it is, with gratitude doing the will of the Giver, loving, ready to return to him.

F. I.

The Templeton Prize to a Buddhist

by Joseph Miahara

On April 9, 1979, in London's Guild Hall, Nikkyo Niwano of Japan was awarded this year's Templeton Prize for progress in religion.

Mr. Niwano, seventy-three years old, is the son of a farmer. He was born in Niigata, a northern province of Japan, and later moved to Tokyo to pursue the practice of various spiritual disciplines. He was deeply impressed by a course of lectures about the Lotus Sutra, a sacred text of Buddhism which is based on the following concept: "The mercy of Buddha is like lotus flowers growing in the mud. We, too, must see to it that the mercy and truth of Buddha flourish in the midst of society."

In those pages, Mr. Niwano found his mission in life. "In my own vague and personal way," he was later to write in his autobiography, "I had long been searching with persistence, for a rule that could save every man, a rule that would not be mysterious, but based, in a convincing way, on clearly defined, systematic rationality. As I listened to the lectures on Lotus Sutra, I found what I had been looking for. The Lotus Sutra seemed to be a perfect teaching capable of saving everyone in the world. It had the power to physically and spiritually help both the individual and society. I was deeply moved by what I had learned."

In 1938, Nikkyo Niwano founded the Rissho-Kosei-kai (Society for Establishing Righteousness and Friendly Relations), a movement for the renewal of Japanese Buddhist lay people. Its precise purpose is to actively contribute to man's liberation from suffering and to the creation of world peace, in the spirit of the Lotus Sutra.

In the beginning, the movement had about thirty members who gathered in a small apartment above a shop run by Mr. Niwano. Two years later, the movement had already grown to include five churches and about 150 families committed to working for "a society organized by persons of the same faith who, through their interaction and unity in faith, seek to perfect the personality of man and realize a peaceful world in accordance with the laws of Buddha."

Yet, even from the earliest days of the movement, Nikkyo Niwano firmly believed that all religions are based on common truths. He reached out to contact the leaders of other religions, seeking to further the cause of world peace through dialogue and mutual cooperation. The value of his initiatives was so appreciated by the Catholic Church, that in 1965 he was the only non-Christian invited to participate in the sessions of Vatican II, as an observer.

At that time he met Pope Paul VI and one sentence, in particular, that the Pope said left him deeply impressed, "Buddhists must pray for Christians, and Christians must pray for Buddhists." These meetings strengthened even more his deep conviction that all religions must cooperate in the building of a better world.

This conviction characterizes the spirit of the Rissho-Kosei-kai and distinguishes it from the other religious movements in Japan. It emphasizes that which unites men rather than that which divides them. And since all religions teach that humanity is only one, and that all men are brothers, religion is absolutely indispensable to the accomplishment of true peace.

The spirituality of the Rissho-Kosei-kai is centered on "The Great Beneficent Master and Lord Sakyamuni, the Eternal Buddha." Its doctrine has continued to grow in depth, and the size of the movement has increased tremendously as well. It now has four million seven hundred thousand members, two hundred twenty-two churches in Japan, and three churches abroad. In addition, it is involved in a series of projects which stress cooperation on an international scale, such as assistance for refugees, relief for the peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Nikkyo Niwano is the founder of a vast movement of spiritual renewal. one of the founding members of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. in which members of all religions participate. and the moving force behind numerous initiatives to alleviate human suffering. The Templeton Prize acknowledges his commitment to an interfaith effort directed toward the construction of a better society and the achievement of peace in the world.

But the achievements of Mr. Niwano reach beyond the confines of the Buddhist world. In 1970, he succeeded in promoting the first World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) which took place in Kyoto, Japan. It was attended by Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Confucians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and others. In addition to establishing fraternal relationships among the participants, this assembly laid the premise for a second World Conference which took place in 1974 at the Catholic University of Louvain,Belgium. With the then existing international conflicts in mind the participants in the second conference made a special effort to study the concrete possibilities of working together for peace, according to the teachings of each religion.

This year, the WCRP, whose honorary president is Mr. Niwano and whose actual president is Bishop Angelo Fernandez, the Catholic Archbishop of New Delhi, will hold a Third Conference in the United States from August 29 to September 7, 1979. It will take place at Princeton University in New Jersey, and its theme will be "The Role of Religion in the Struggle to Create a World Community." During a papal audience granted to him in February of this year, Mr. Niwano invited Pope John Paul II to attend the 1979 conference.

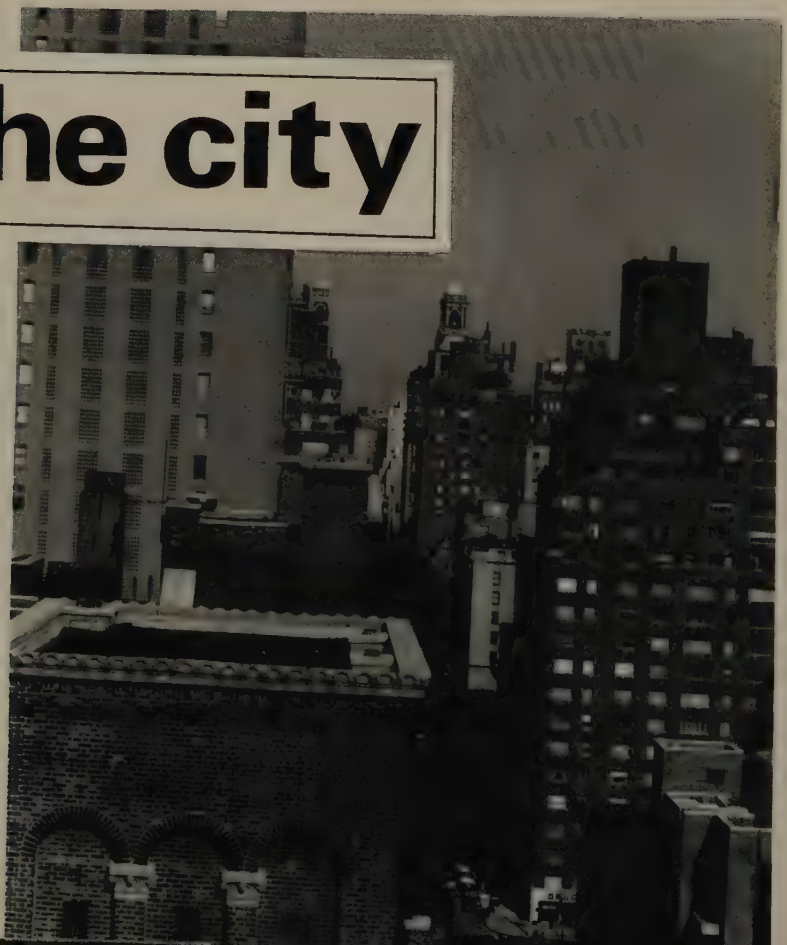
In the meantime, he has also been working to promote the First Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP).

Mr. Niwano's accomplishments do not end here. In 1960, he founded the Brighter Society Movement to fight against the growing indifference to human suffering which he perceived in Japanese society. The Movement was soon supported by other religious and civic organizations committed to bringing "true happiness" to those who suffer and to building a better society for all. Its projects take many forms: from the cleaning of public places to the establishment of blood banks; from the organization of seminars aimed at improving the relationship between parents and children, the young and the old; to the institution of a fund for the development of charitable enterprises. However, Mr. Niwano's selection by a jury composed of leaders from among the world's major religions as the winner of the 1979 Templeton Prize (which has been awarded in previous years to Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Roger Schutz of Taize, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Cardinal Suenens, Chiara Lubich and Thomas Torrence) was prompted, above all, by his work in the field of interfaith cooperation aimed at the construction of a better society and the achievement of peace in the world. ▲

Top: Mr. Niwano at an audience with Pope John Paul II in February 1979.
Bottom: Rome, February 1979. Nikkyo Niwano with Chiara Lubich, foundress and president of the Focolare Movement.

Photo by Doris Baum

In the city

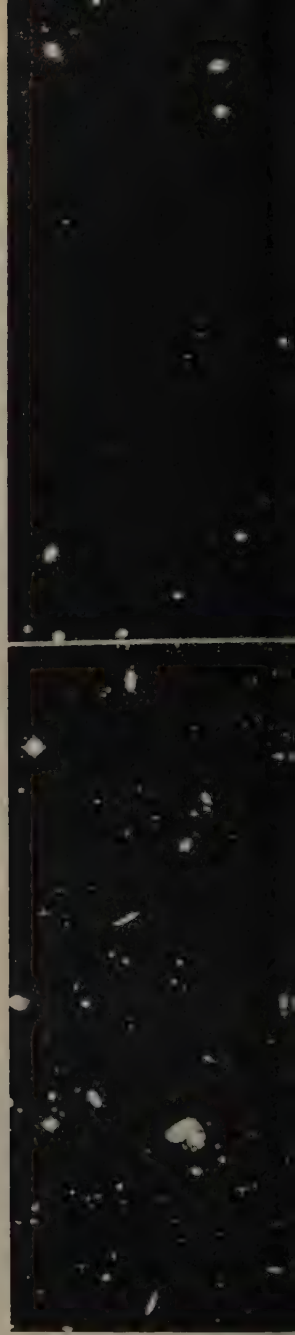


The wind
in the city:
no trees to blow,
antennas,
and the wind doesn't mind –
it gives them life.
The rain in the city:
no green leaves
to brush and sing,
but sidewalks,
lifeless streets,
and the rain
doesn't mind –
it makes them shine.
The sun
in the city:
no prairie to warm up
in its glow,
ironsteel buildings,
cold and still
waiting to see it come,
and the sun doesn't mind –
it makes them glitter.
I love the city,
impersonal and lonely.
No smiles,
no softer blues and greens,
no readymade companionship,
no dreams,
and I don't mind.
A bit a day:
it's one, then two, and three . . .
like steps in a dance,
like rings of a chain,
like knots of a net,
like small fires for a blaze
like drops of love . . .
your love
that's here to make us one
to make all one.
I love the city.

Ellen

ANSIT SYSTEM
BWAY IRT
RONX AND QUEENS
WNTOWN • BROADWAY
VEST END • BRIGHTON • 4TH AVE LOCAL
AMAICA & DOWNTOWN BROAD ST.

by PIERO PASOLINI



Unity in the universe

Our article draws from the resources of modern cosmology, the science of the universe, whose principles are tied to Einstein's theories of Relativity.

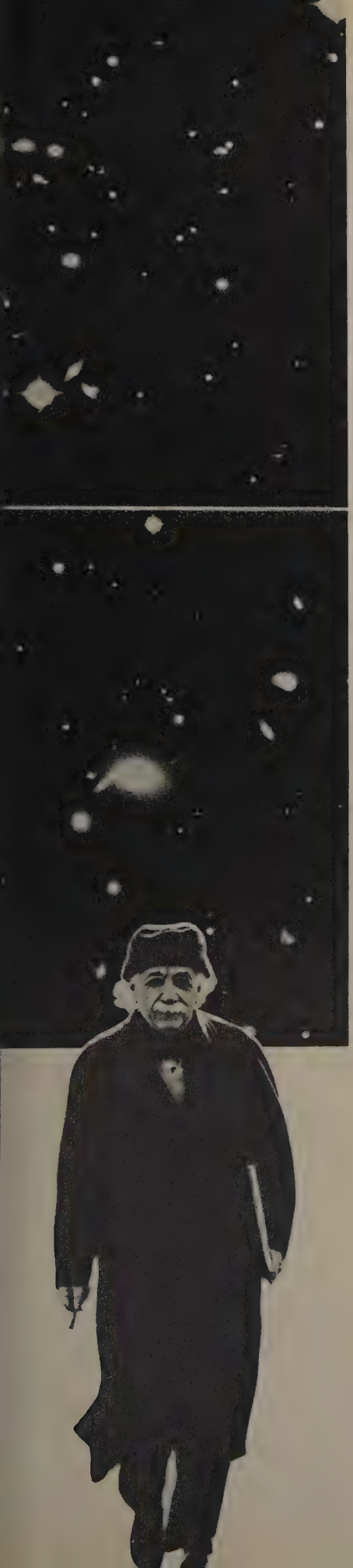
Until a few centuries ago very little was known about the universe except for the earth, the moon, the sun, a few planets and stars. Knowledge was limited to what could be learned from observation with the human eye alone. Mistakes were made even in interpreting the motion of the heavenly bodies. With Copernicus and then with Galileo and Kepler we began to have an accurate understanding of their movements in the sky.

Newton explained the motion of the heavenly bodies using a new, extremely important concept: the force of universal attraction, or gravitation. Later we will see how essential this concept is in explaining the existence of the universe.

About a century ago we had a rather precise idea of what was now called the "solar system." The distances between the sun and the planets, as well as the masses of each one, were being determined. Even an explanation for the shape of the trajectory of the planets around the sun was found.

What about the stars? An idea of their distances from the earth was determined. It was also understood that they were similar to the sun, although their exact nature remained a mystery. It became apparent that the Milky Way, first accurately described by Galileo, was actually a very thick cluster of stars. This star cluster is called a galaxie, a boundless mass of stars and gaseous material, having a flattened form and extending for thousands upon thousands of light years. (A light year is the distance travelled by light in a year, or about 5,880,000,000,000 miles). From this, a first model of the universe could be constructed: the sun with the earth and the other planets is a small part of a galaxie, the Milky Way.

The early photographs taken through telescopes revealed strange small clouds scattered through the



night sky. These spiral-shaped clouds were given the name "spiral nebulae," from the Latin *nebula*, a cloud. They seemed to be entirely different from the large cloud of gas strewn between the stars. For over a century they remained a mystery until scientists began to suspect that those spiral nebulae were small in appearance only because they were very far from our galaxie, and were probably galaxies themselves, great masses of stars far away in space. Complex measurements were made to determine the distances to the closer nebulae. They were found to be *millions* of light years from us, an enormous jump in the scale of cosmic distances. Our own galaxie was found to be larger than was previously believed: our Milky Way is a spiral disc having a diameter of about 100,000 light years and a width, in its central nucleus, of about 10,000 light years. The closest galaxie to us is Andromeda, which is as large as ours and is about 3 million light years away from us.

The discovery of other galaxies similar to ours was a great step forward in our understanding of the universe. Today the galaxies are numbered by the million within a radius extending for tens of thousands of light years from earth — this is the maximum limit reached by our more advanced means of observation. This ocean of galaxies is extended into a limitless space. Moreover certain phenomena, like the frequency of light emitted by the galaxies, indicate that almost certainly the distances between the galaxies is increasing. The universe which we see seems to be expanding.

As our radius of observation has increased, we have been able to, at least, see the surface of the universe. Within the galaxies are millions of stars, each a mass of hydrogen in nuclear reaction. We also observe strange objects such as neutron stars, black holes, white holes, nebuli of gases in condensation. We assume there are unknown thousands of planets around the stars and, on some rare planet, life; and on at least one, man. Going into greater depth, to the infinitely small, we see the molecules, the atoms, the electrons, protons, neutrons, and even smaller, the strange undefinable particles which are the ultimate known components of each organization of matter and are responsible for the energy and, at the most basic level, the motion of the universe. A picture of unimaginable complexity!

Everything in the universe is affected by gravitation. Each object has a certain amount of gravitational force, or pull on other objects, depending only on the mass of the object. Newton described this force as a mutual attraction among the bodies, proportional to their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

This force is seen not only between the massive stars, or, on earth, as weight, which measures the force of the earth's attraction on an object. Very delicate experiments demonstrate that it is present also among small bodies. In these cases the force is very weak. Gravity is the weakest of all the natural forces. Even so, there is a very slight, but measurable attraction between two spheres weighing two pounds and at a small fraction of an inch from each other.

When considering the gravitational force exerted by different types of matter, all types of matter can be considered equal. A one pound mass of lead is identical to a one pound of feathers when con-

Top: If a large telescope is pointed towards any zone of the sky which, to the naked eye, appears to be free of any nebulae or stars, or dust from our galaxie, there would appear no end of galaxies of every type. It would be an infinite repetition of the very complex phenomena of our galaxie. In the photo are three examples of very narrow zones of sky seen at maximum enlargement. There are galaxies millions and billions of light years distant. The spots with the small crossed rays are stars close to our galaxie which appear this way because of their brilliance and their effect on the camera lens.
Bottom: Albert Einstein, the scientist who upset all modern scientific thought with his theories of Relativity.

sidering gravitational forces. Since we could consider the mass as made up of the protons, neutrons and electrons, we could say it is the number of these that determine the mass, and not how close they are to each other, which would be the density, and which would certainly differ for lead and for feathers.

This shows that gravity as an agent diffused among planets, stars and galaxies reveals one of the aspects of the unity of the universe. Since everything is made up of the same elemental particles — protons, neutrons and electrons — even though their organization could result in an infinite number of different concrete realities, considered as a whole, the gravity would be constant.

There is also another aspect of gravity which reveals the unity of the universe. Here we must refer to Einstein, who upset all modern scientific thought when he introduced his theories of Relativity. In his general theory of Relativity he links the force of gravity to the concept of time, space, mass and "inertia" and develops a new concept of inertia within his theory. Einstein reflected that both the force of gravity and of "inertia" are proportional to the mass of an object; in fact, they define the mass.

Inertia is the resistance of a material to a force which tries to move it or to change its velocity. An example: Let's consider two railroad cars of the same weight moving on a smooth, level track. We apply a force X to one of them bring it to a velocity of 15 miles per hour after applying the force for one minute. Now we connect the cars together, doubling the mass since they are equal in all ways. (Their gravitational force is also doubled). Now in order to overcome their combined inertia and bring them in one minute to the same velocity of 15 miles per hour, it is necessary to double the force to 2X. It is clear that a doubled mass corresponds to doubled force-weight-gravity, and to a doubled inertia. None of this was new and was completely studied in physics.

Einstein had an idea. Could it be that inertia and gravity are intimately linked together in the gravitational force of the mass? Physicists made many very delicate measurements to see if there were any deviations between the measures of gravity and those of inertia. There were none. Inertia and gravity are rigorously "glued together" to the mass. Einstein proceeded to say (and this is the fundamental principle of the general theory of Relativity) that gravitational force has exactly the same nature as an acceleration of velocity. He used the example of a cabin to illustrate this: A man enclosed in a cabin has the same sensation of weight when the cabin is firmly on the ground under the the action of the earth's gravity as when it is in distant space being accelerated by a rocket with a thrust of a value equal to that of the force of earth's gravity. Even a scale with springs would indicate the same weight. Our astronauts are familiar with this sensation and describe the thrust of the rockets in terms of how many times it exceeds the force of gravity, or how many "g's" of thrust are produced.

How do we combine our understandings of the force of gravity and inertia? A body which is close to the earth is attracted by it. This is understandable. Why does the same body have inertia? That is, why does it resist me so that I have to use strength to move it?

We have seen that inertia is linked to the mass, as is gravity; but, according to Einstein, inertia is created by that same gravity. To explain this, Einstein used an idea first expressed in the previous century by the philosopher Mach, which he called the "Principle of Mach." It states, "Inertia is created by the gravitational action of the entire mass of the universe at any of its points." This could be demonstrated with Relativity.

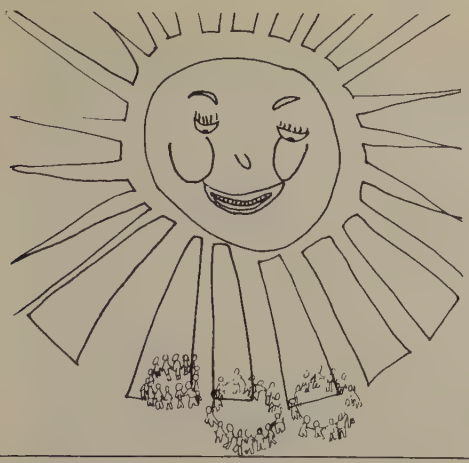
In other words, a body (be it a railroad car or a proton) has inertia in proportion to its mass because of the gravitational attraction which all the other masses of the universe have on it.

Gravitation, as an attracting universal force, annuls itself in every point because the pull in every direction is equal. (Of course when bodies are relatively near — planets, stars, close galaxies — there is a reciprocal attraction and the pull is not symmetrical for these near objects). On the other hand, this same gravitational force, as the inertial force, makes itself felt very strongly during each acceleration applied to a body. It is as if the universal gravitational field tends to keep each body nailed to its present situation of quiet or in its uniform motion. The total body of matter, the infinite number of galaxies distributed throughout billions and billions of light years (or better yet, the infinity of protons, neutrons and electrons which compose all the elements), create a universal field of gravitation which expresses itself, in every point, with the inertia of each single mass.

It could seem ridiculous to think that these very distant beings, these galaxies billions of light years away, can exercise a sensitive influence on the earth. One might even think that if all the galaxies were to disappear, with the exception of ours, no one would even be aware. . . . However, nothing is more erroneous. The theory of Relativity, in applying the Principle of Mach, shows that infinitely more numerous than the sun, the moon, our own galaxie, and the nearby ones, is the infinite number of far away galaxies (the farther they are, the more numerous), which contribute to inertia, that is, which give form to the earth itself. If the far away universe were annihilated, then we too would be annihilated because our mass is defined by the totality of the other masses and in turn, even our mass contributes to define the entire universe.

All this reveals an essential situation of unity: at a primordial level, each part constitutes the whole but is also constituted by the whole. This is certainly the most profound and the most essential condition of existence of the universe. It sets itself, first of all, as an existential premise to all the other infinite realities which the universe fulfills in itself, in the course of its evolution. ▲

THE VERY YOUNG AND THE GOSPEL



The Gen 3 are children forming the third generation of the Focolare Movement. As the first two generations, they, too, live in order to give their contribution toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer, "That all may be one." They communicate to others, especially children, their genuine desire to love God and for him all mankind.

Dear Gen 3,

A year has passed since the last convention, and I have received word from every part of the world that, by staying on the ray of the will of God, you have worked wonders — especially by courageously defending the truth, even at the cost of remaining alone. I also learned that as a consequence of this, your friends very often followed you, because they felt that your conviction came from God.

All of this, and the contribution which the Gen 3 have made to the "Invasion of Love"[2] (which is still going ahead) have encouraged me to share with you, again this year, a new aspect of our ideal.

It concerns the commandment of Jesus, the one he calls *new* and *his own*. Here it is: "Love one another as I have loved you."

Now I will explain how Jesus, who led the first Gen to discover the will of God, then urged them to put all of their strength into living the New Commandment. You see, Gen, when God became man and came into the world to stay with us, he lived just like all other men. He was a baby like other babies, even though, as you can imagine, he was a perfect son. He also studied like you do, and when he was older, he worked. In other words, he did what other men do.

"Before all else, always love one another."

The law of heaven

by Chiara Lubich

But Jesus is also God, and he came into the world in order to bring to all men *his* way of living: the life of heaven. Now, the life of heaven is all love. Jesus therefore wants men and everything around them to find a new order in accordance with the law of heaven, which is love.

So, when the first Gen began to read the Gospel, all the words of Jesus that speak of love made a tremendous impression on them. For example: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

"Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do it to me."

These words seemed to them to have the power to change everything. In fact, who lived like this? Only a very few people.

LOVE OF THE POOR

Although the first Gen understood that the Gospel is based on love, they weren't sure how to love or even whom to love first. It was Jesus, through circumstances and events, to show them where to begin. Looking around them, they saw many people who were poor and abandoned, living in shacks. Immediately they began to help, certain that in loving these people they were loving Jesus.

It was a new experience to love people they didn't know, people who were used to being by themselves and were often dirty and dressed in rags. Sometimes the Gen could not even understand what they were saying. Although they needed help these people often didn't welcome the Gen or trust them either, because they were not used to trusting anyone.

In spite of all this, the Gen overcame their shyness and kept on loving.

It would certainly have been easier to love people who were

(1) The "invasion of love" refers to an initiative of the members of the Focolare Movement all over the world to counteract hatred and violence with the love which is found in the Gospel.

agreeable, but to love the poor required a truer love.

This love of the poor was like a training that Jesus wanted the Gen to go through; it was a school of supernatural love. They wanted to love not just because it was good to do it, but because Jesus had said so. And I can assure you that, in a certain sense, the Gen did not even see what would have been outwardly distasteful. They saw only Jesus.

While I was still living at home, my parents often gave me permission to bring a poor person home to eat with us. I would prepare the dinner with great care and set the table with our best silverware and napkins, because I knew that in serving the poor person, I was serving Jesus. This made me very happy.

Later on, in the first Focolare, at meals there would often be seated around the table a focolarina and a poor person, another focolarina and another poor person . . . For the first Gen, the chance to share their food with the poor was like a celebration.

They also went to visit the poor in their homes, and often found sick people there who needed medicine, or others who asked for things which the Gen didn't have. The Gen then would ask Jesus to give them whatever was needed. They used to say: "Give it to us 'for you,' in that poor person." They were certain they would receive what they asked because Jesus says it in the Gospel. And Jesus always answered them, like the time they received the size 12 pair of shoes, for a person who needed them, and thousands of other times, too.

Today, the Gen still ask and obtain from Jesus just as the first Gen did. The Gen from Marino[2] told me recently that they had wanted to help the family of a girl whose father had died in an accident and whose grandparents were both sick. They prayed to Jesus in this way: "We ask you to give us, 'for you' in that family, what they need, because you are in them." Shortly afterwards while trying to put together some food

(2) a town near Rome.

nd clothing, they met a woman who gave them an envelope containing money. Another time, while they were going into a supermarket to buy some food for the same family, another woman who knew what they were doing told them: "Buy whatever you want; I will pay for everything." On a third occasion, the owner of the grocery store himself invited them to take whatever they needed, without paying for it. In this way, the family received all that they needed. The Gen were filled with joy, and with an even deeper faith in Jesus.

The fact that Jesus always answered them immediately gave great strength to the first Gen, because it assured them that they were on the right track and that he really did consider done to himself whatever they did for the poor.

The Gen were also helped a great deal by the example of the saints. There was St. Francis, for instance, who had given his cloak to the poor thirty times, and Mother Cabrini who, together with her friends, often slept out in the cold, facing terrible dangers, in order to give food and shelter to the orphans and the sick.

THE WORKS OF MERCY

Naturally, little by little the first Gen realized that people in need of food and clothing were not the only "poor" ones. They saw that there were also other kinds of poor people: prisoners in need of company and encouragement, the sick in need of comfort, orphans, people in doubt . . . and soon they found themselves trying to put all the works of mercy into practice.

If we perform the works of mercy, Jesus will tell us at the end of our lives: "I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you comforted me; I was in prison and you came to visit me . . . Come. You have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . ."

When they realized this, they were overjoyed and their hearts were filled with gratitude towards Jesus.

You must know how it is at school when there are exams, Gen. (Some of the first Gen were students too). Everyone is afraid, especially at the final exams, because those who don't know the answers will fail and have to repeat the whole year. In that case, knowing the questions ahead of time would solve everything. And this is what Jesus did. He let us know the exam questions ahead of time, in order to make it easier for us to enter Paradise.

In other words, Jesus is really unbeatable. The more the first Gen realized the greatness of his love for them, the more they wanted to love him back by doing what pleased him.

LOVE EVERYONE

Then they understood that not only the poor (those who were in need of help) had to be loved, but *everyone*, because we read in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

So they were always ready to make themselves one — by rejoicing with a friend who had received good grades, or by suffering with a cousin who had hurt his leg; by helping someone with her homework, or by advising someone to make peace with his friends after they'd had an argument; by breaking up a fight so that no one would get hurt, or by standing up for the truth so that their friends wouldn't be misled. . .

Then, in the evening, after having loved all day long without ever stopping, their hearts were filled with joy and peace. They were never bored, and their life was wonderful.

It really was like that, Gen, because what St. John explained to us had happened. He wrote: "We have passed from death to life because we have loved our brothers."

LOVE OF ENEMY

At that time, they recognized the beauty and newness of another phrase of the Gospel: "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you."

They immediately began to seek out everyone whom they might have considered an "enemy" in order to make peace with them.

MUTUAL LOVE

You may wonder what happened after they began to love like that, first being charitable towards the poor, and then towards everyone — even their own enemies.

What happened was this: since all of them were loving, the love among the Gen became mutual.

Jesus' words: "Love one another as I have loved you," then seemed to be like the precious pearl of the Gospel. They understood that this was the will of God which was dearest to Jesus. He calls it the *new* commandment, *his own* commandment.

Right away, they said to themselves: "Then we, too, must love one another like this — as Jesus has loved us."

Do you know to what extent he loved us?

To the extent of dying on the cross.

So the Gen looked at one another and each one said to the other: "I am ready to give my life for you. I am ready to give it for you, for you . . ." All of them were ready to give it for each one.

In this way, they made the pact of mutual love which everyone still remembers. It was a very important decision which had a strong impact on the very life of our Movement.

From that moment on, the Gen put everything that belonged to them at the service of all the others. They knew that there could not be any turning back, because if they were ready to give up their own lives, how could they hold on to the other little things they had which could be of some use to others.

One day they took all of their clothes out of the closet and put them all together. Then each one was given what she needed and all the rest was for the poor. They did this with their pay checks, and with their beautiful experiences as

well. They shared them in order to encourage and help one another, so that they could all go toward sanctity together. Nothing belonged to them any more; everything belonged to God, and out of love for him, they put it at the service of the others.

It was a wonderful experience.

THE PACT OF MERCY

Certainly, they also encountered difficulties in loving one another, because, as you know, the "old man"[3] always shows up in us, and in the others too, and he is a terrible enemy.

Gen, I want to tell you about something Jesus made the first Gen understand. It was a device which gave them the courage to begin anew to love one another each day in spite of their own shortcomings and those of the others.

They thought: God loves us so much that when we repent he not only forgives us, but also forgets our faults and considers us all new. Couldn't we act like that with one another, too?

So they made a pact of mercy with one another. They decided that every morning they would look at one another with "new eyes," forgetting about the difficulties of the day before, just as if they were meeting for the very first time.

I can assure you that this was really an excellent idea. I think it would be good for all of us to put it into practice now, too.

As I said before, if we put the new commandment of Jesus into practice, we will be living the life of heaven while we are still here on earth.

So let's go forward together. This year we will try to love in all the ways that I have described: by loving the poor, by putting the works of mercy into practice, by loving everyone, loving our enemies, and loving one another.

If we do this, it will be a very fruitful year; a year of light, full of opportunities to love.

Let's not wait. Let's begin right now, during this convention! ▲

(3) Colossians 3:9-11.

THE MARIAPOLIS IS AN EXPERIENCE OF UNITY

"My strongest impression was the unity. Unity among all the members, unity among older and younger persons with different nationalities, languages and backgrounds. This is what made the week work out."
(A student)

"The Mariapolis has taught me how to find Jesus in the present moment and to love him in every person."
(A mother)

"I came full of problems. What I found in the Mariapolis is a tremendous hope for the future."
(A father)

"It was like meeting a family I had always belonged to. Everyone was open and friendly but it was more than that. I felt completely at home."
(A Sister)

"The Mariapolis has changed me. I didn't want it to end. I'm going to live it and love."
(A young woman)

"The Mariapolis has been an experience of God and a model of what the world should be."
(A young man)

1979 MARIAPOLIS

SOUTHWEST

Place: New Mexico Highlands University
Las Vegas, New Mexico

Date: June 24, after supper
June 30, after breakfast

Registration Fee:
Single persons U.S.$ 25.00
Married couples U.S.$ 30.00

No registration fee for young people up to 18 years of age.
The registration fee is not included in the accommodation fee.

Accommodations: (meals and lodgings)
Adults U.S.$120.00
Children (from 3 to 12 years) U.S.$ 60.00

NORTHWEST

Place: St. Martin's College – Lacey, Washington

Date: July 22, after supper
July 28, after breakfast

Registration Fee:
Single persons: U.S.$ 25.00
Married couples U.S.$ 30.00

No registration fee for young people up to 18 years of age.
The registration fee is not included in the accommodation fee.

Accommodations: (meals and lodgings)
Adults: U.S.$120.00
Children (from 3 to 12 years) U.S.$ 60.00

EAST COAST

Place: Alfred University – Alfred, New York

Date: August 5, after supper
August 11, after breakfast

Registration Fee:
Single persons U.S.$ 25.00
Married couples U.S.$ 30.00

No registration fee for young people up to 18 years of age.
The registration fee is not included in the accommodation fee.

Accommodations: (meals and lodgings)
Adults U.S.$120.00
Children (from 3 to 12 years) U.S.$ 60.00

For further information and registration forms write to:
Focolare Movement – Mariapolis
P.O. Box 496 – New York, NY 10021

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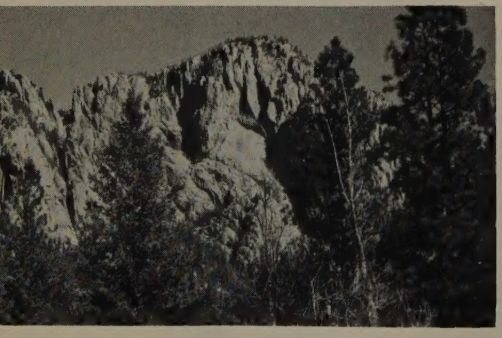
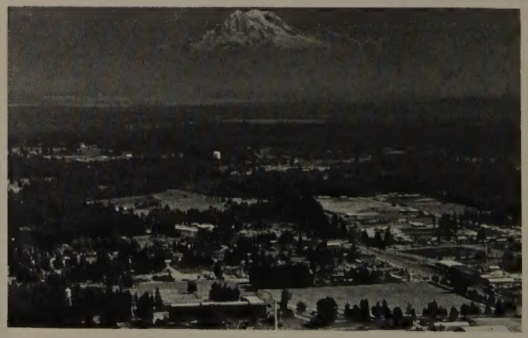
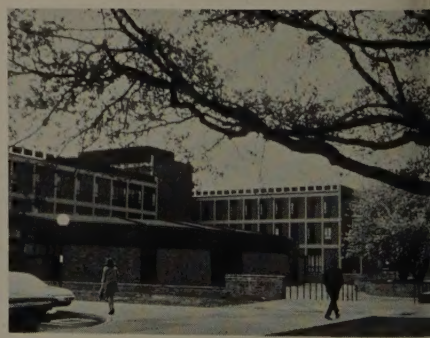


SOUTHWEST MARIAPOLIS
June 24, after supper
June 30, after breakfast



NORTHWEST MARIAPOLIS
July 22, after supper
July 28, after breakfast



EAST COAST MARIAPOL
August 5, after supper
August 11, after breakf